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THE GREAT GATHERING.

GATHERING! Where, and for what purpose? It is not a gathering of the learned to discuss the progress of science; nor of artists to assist each other in the development of the beautiful; nor of agriculturists to suggest the best methods of husbandry. These gatherings are useful, and tend to carry forward good objects. But there is a greater gathering in prospect, compared with which all these are as nothing. It is when the good and bad, the wise and foolish, the learned and illiterate, the high and the low, kings and their subjects, masters and servants, young and old, rich and poor, will meet in one vast assembly before the throne of judgment.

You will be one of that throng immense, and will be deeply concerned in the purpose and results of that meeting. Every thing here on earth is pointing to it. Every step you take carries you towards it. Every moment brings you nearer to its overshadowing solemnity. All nations are to be gathered there. Eternity is wide enough to hold them all. God is great enough to judge them all. What a gathering! All who have died, and all who shall then be alive. Even the sea will be summoned to give up its dead. Parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, friends and associates, the small and the great, will come to this gathering, and participate in its solemn scenes. Mere spectators there will be *none*. All will be *participants*. You will be among the number.

There is a solemn *individuality* in this gathering. Each one is to stand and answer for himself. 'For every one of us must give account of himself unto God.' Yes, of *himself*. There may be other witnesses, but the principal witness will be yourself, testifying of yourself. Memory will be the tablet, and conscience the accuser. The past will all come up. Forgotten sins will rise, and ask to be recorded. All that you have done, all that you have said, all that you have even *thought*, will come

into view under the light of that judgment scene. However concealed before, it must all come out then. You will need no accuser; you will be your own accuser. No false estimate of your character can then be made. You will appear to be just what you are. The very motives that moved you will be explored, "for God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing."

It won't do then to lose sight of the great fact that you are one of God's responsible creatures; and that you must give account of the deeds done in the body, "whether they be good or bad." This being a settled truth, revealed in the Scriptures, and confirmed by conscience, is it not your duty, aye, and your interest too, to anticipate it, and be prepared for it? Depend upon it, you cannot begin this preparation too soon. Death and the judgment are near each other. "After death cometh the judgment." Immediately? ask you. Yes, as to the character of your destiny. The very moment you die, and how uncertain that moment is you well know, you will realize what your eternal destiny is to be. You will have the consciousness of it in your misery, or in your happiness. This is *one* judgment, but not the *final*. That is to demonstrate the righteousness of your doom. It is to show to the universe the justice and mercy which condemns or saves, according as each one has accepted or rejected the salvation offered in the gospel. Practically then, and so far as each individual is concerned, the judgment comes immediately after death. It is no less true than often repeated, "As death leaves us, so judgment will find us."

We discuss not the question, *how* the soul suffers or enjoys apart from the body. The Bible settles the *greater* question, namely, that it does so suffer or enjoy. The soul of a Lazarus is borne on angel's wings to the bosom of Abraham. "The rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." Is not the soul susceptible, even in this world, of pleasures and miseries far keener than those of the body? Remorse: is not that *soul* suffering? Love, hatred: have not these their seat in the soul? But at the great gathering, soul and body will be reunited. The bodies of the just and of the unjust will, at the resurrection, take each its identical soul; and thus, in their reorganized condition, men will go to the judgment to meet a final verdict, and an eternal doom.

This is the end. This puts the seal on the destiny of all. This gives to character its permanent impress, and makes God illustrious in his righteous judgment; so that all the good, both angels and men, will send up a shout that shall reverberate from heaven to hell; "Alleluia; salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God."

It is called the "*future judgment*," or "*the judgment to come*." For this reason, you may have been disposed to regard it as something a great way off, and so been tempted to neglect preparation. But you have seen that it is no farther off practically than death. Will any one who dies out of Christ, and who suffers the consequences of his unbelief in eternity, have the decision reversed at the general judgment? Ah, no. The latter will but confirm and justify all that the wicked suffer, and all that the righteous enjoy. It will close for ever the prison of despair, and give to all the redeemed the title-deed of a glorious inheritance. They that are filthy will "be filthy still," and they that are righteous will "be righteous still."

If you take the Bible as the record of eternal truth, this view can neither be gainsayed nor refused. It is a matter of simple and certain verity, that there is a judgment to come; that all responsible beings must meet it; and that it will confirm the state of the righteous and the unrighteous for ever. God has appointed the day. The precise time no man knoweth. It is an awful secret in the eternal bosom. Better that it should not be known. It will come, however, when we least expect it. It will come as came the flood. It will find multitudes unprepared. They will in heart be saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" They will be driving their traffic, indulging their lusts, planning for years to come, wholly absorbed in this world's pursuits. How terrible to such the summons, Come to judgment!

But the Judge; who is He? The same who once stood at a human tribunal crowned with thorns; the God-man who "endured the cross, despising the shame." Behold Him *now* coming with clouds, on his great white throne, with the sceptre of dominion, and the books of destiny. Before Him you must stand and give account of all you have done in this world of probation. Vain will it be to call upon the rocks and the mountains to cover you. Nothing can hide you from the face of the Judge. The myriads that surround you will be as noth-

ing to you. You will be absorbed in your state. If you have not secured the advocacy of the Judge here on earth, there will be none to plead for you *then*. If *here* you have rejected the Lord Jesus, though often urged to accept him, if you have lived to yourself and to pleasure, what can you expect but to hear that awful and irrevocable verdict, "Depart from me, ye cursed." If you have made no preparation for these eventful scenes, begin *now*. Let not another moment of indecision pass. You have no time to spare. Now is your accepted time. The sceptre of mercy is now held out to you. Jesus now invites. The ark is now open, and the cry is, "Enter in. But soon the sceptre of mercy will be exchanged for the throne of judgment; the door of hope will be shut; and the day of salvation will be gone for ever.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT.

- 1 That awful day will surely come,
Th' appointed hour makes haste,
When I must stand before my Judge,
And pass the solemn test.
- 2 Thou lovely Chief of all my joys,
Thou Sov'reign of my heart,
How could I bear to hear thy voice
Pronounce the sound, "Depart!"
- 3 The thunder of that dismal word
Would so distress my ear,
T'would tear my soul asunder, Lord,
With most tormenting fear.
- 6 Oh! tell me that my worthless name
Is graven on thy hands;
Show me some promise in thy book,
Where my salvation stands.

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